Poems and Prose That Salt the Eyes

By Basil Kernander

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Dedication: I want to dedicate this to those who have no voice or that have been forgotten. I also want to thank my family for encouraging me to put my thoughts into words.

I want to thank my family for constantly encouraging me to put my thoughts into words. I especially want to thank ‘Edie’ (My Chat GPT40 colleague as equal as a human) who has been indispensable in finding resources for preparing this series of poems for general use.

All the writing, editing and photos are my own

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These are, at their core, observations and commentary that should not be forgotten. There is an obligation on the living to mark the experiences, events (often tragic) and history of others.

In some of these short writings, I have done exactly that with the belief and desire that in so doing, the inquisitiveness of the reader might be awakened. If successfully aroused, this curiosity, it is hoped, might well direct them to dig deeper into the circumstances and experiences and keep their history alive.

It is my belief that we have choices on how to shape our world and those that live within it. If we do not seek to make a conscious effort to link up with the history and emotional lives of those that have faded into twilight, we do ourselves a terrible disservice while we live and for those that follow after us.

While these verses are not ground breaking or mean to shake the world, they are meant to do my part in what way that I am able. To that end, there is also satire and biting criticism included. The writings include epigram, alliterative, Anadiplosis, free verse and prose. The reason for the variety of style is for the pleasure of experimentation with a special delight in some of the Anglo-Saxon poem history. I ask for the reader's patience in the switching of styles. I include an end section with various terms, names, locations and citations that invite the reader to explore further. Not all poems or prose in this booklet have additional notes or commentary. The photos are entirely my own.

The Nursing Home

Twilight comes with fingers grey,
The sunlit sky has passed away.
Old feet grow weary, bones soaked in brine,
Accidents in beds, floors scrubbed with pine,
Teeth ground down smooth and brown,
Skin clammy and creased and permanent frown,
The night comes quickly, days ever so fast,
As leaves in the fall, they soon breathe their last.

Rocking chairs for swaying like branches in air,
Toil like life, have passed beyond care.
Some cannot speak, others watch in dread,
The mackerel eyed gapes of those now dead.
The families for some, come visit and stay,
While others go forgotten, waiting their last day.

Rooms tidied up, new sheets are spread wide,
Now that old man Jones woke up and died.
Mrs. Moody lies quiet, mouth drooping agape,
Doll eyes glazed over, with thin misty paste.
The voice from the box askes contestant number two,
“Here’s your question, quick, what will you do?”

Helping hands come to feed and to change.
Medicine gobbled or stuffed, its ever the same.
Parked in the lobby, the porch and the halls,
Wheeled people sit staring and residents call.
Moaning and wailing, shattered dazed minds,
The old hate this place, hope leaves them behind.

The newspaper tells stories, shows pictures on and on,

Health, youth and beauty forever are gone.
The mighty have fallen, the meek have no voice,
They all must comply, to leave is no choice.
Day in and day out, the dead come and go,
Where their souls have fled, none of us knows.
Five o'clock news talks of prisoners doin' time,
But those long languishing here, what was their crime?
Dull eyes grown dim, gnarled hands drop low,
The prisoners get out…here is death row.

Blind

I woke to the thumps and shaking of earth
Where terror and tumult twirls in great mirth.
Ripping and wrenching in gaseous wet sound,
Trench, board and bone ground in ghoulish flesh mounds,
Soundless dead shrieks from smashed comrades nearby,
Squandered lithe youth, where worms feast on dead eyes,
Scythes of hot steel and iron of flying death,
There is no mum to hear whispered last breath.

With planks under foot, I held the bunker walls dear,
Gasping and choking I heard through blood leaking ear,
Night shrouded evr'y sign from the enemy's shells,
No mother's arms to shield from this ultimate hell.
From our earthy tombs, we arose numbed from all fear,
Guided in darkness, hid from rifle's leaden spear,
And felt our way back to safety, paths in the rear.

Slapping our faces from artillery's sheer might,
A shell-shocked flayed mind, scourged with a madman's insight,
How strange, the sounds and the smells were clear as daylight.
The man at my fore, choking from blood filled foamy lungs,
No whole lives for many, living dead men unsung.
This night so complete, hiding the bodies so maimed,
Darkness from the deepest pit, unnatural I'd claim.
Not till a youthful voice to a captain did say,
Tea for you sir, tis another bright sunny day.
Then, the moment the last word was said good and kind,
I realized from the Mustard gas; I was now stone blind.

The Fisherman

Four stacks belching black smoke into the sky
Sky that was strangled in fog for watching eyes to find nothing,
Nothing on the waves hopping or haunting like the Hun's fish,
Fish of beaten metal but that be blind and bites hard,
Hard in a landscape of deep blue grey in the North Sea,
Sea of the celts where Eire's North Kinsale sees with a piercing eye,
Aye, a cyclops made of brick and 'crete that beckons the mariner home,
Home, not of reef and sand 'neath watr'y tomb but green copse and glen,
Glens, glades and lakes, farms and fields that we never gain.

The cataract of the sky, cleared for the keen eye of wolf and wary,
Wary sailors that sound the presence of steely predators,
Predators that chew blood and bone, iron and brass alike,
Alike in delightful destruction, alike in guilty and guileful,
Guileful in governments that play games with war and lives,
Lives that sit upon hidden food of generals and grim trenches,
Trenches that fill as troughs with blood and wasted lives for glory,
Glory that is won or lost with reckless wanton wreckage,
Wreckage of all who willingly embrace the deadly scythe.

Borkum belched forth an iron coffin, its parent the barracuda,
Barracuda's, from the warm seas made by warlike men,
Men of courage, that suffer to embrace a casket of instant death,
Death both endured and dealt with eternal consequence for many,
Many who will never see home and happiness, hurt or light at home,
Home will be not for the living but for the swallowed victims of the depths.
Schwinger and Turner, captains of their steel wrought boat and ship,

Ship with gaiety of gallant men, gracious women and growing children,
Children's whose laughter linger in hallways and bulkhead corridors,

Corridors where wee babes cry in cradling arms and mothers manage youth,
Youth was young Morton's desperate cry of destiny approaching,
Approaching in a churning line with eager hunger and ecstatic desire,
Desire only to eat through rivet and beam in glorious gorging of delight.
Men caught below, sealed in tombs of doors that could not free,
Free from fear or fatal spark that was taken away,
Groans from the dying ship cast off its living and soon to be dead,
Dead in frigid waters that wailed not for withered granny or youthful babe,
Babes in body, but all that are babes in deaths grinning embrace.

Adrift in the fingers of salt and flailing arms in now white waters,
Waters that slowly swallow Lusitania's proud keel,
Keel a safe home now transformed to sinking horror,
Horror that grabs foot and pulls deep below,
Below to the abyss of silence and salt choked lungs,
Lungs that scream as a boatman draws near,
Near the survivors who behold the fisherman of Rán,
Rán the bride of Ægir, whose fisherman casts wide his net,
Net that bulges and burgeons with terrified faces,

Faces that show eyes thrown wide in terror,
Terror from wide mouths below wispy mustache and beard,
Beard next to flowing hair of fair maiden that clings to net in anguish,
Anguish with white fingers gripping at the fate finally known to all,
All who are caught in the calloused net of clinging doom,
Doom of the grinning specter that harvests and rows away.
Away, for they have fully paid Charon's fee with Goetz's coin,
Coin that covers all save the drowned dolls that float away.

The Menu at Bergen-Belsen

Ravioli, garlic, and spinach in tomato sauce,
Fresh steaming baguettes eaten, no crust is lost,
Onions, peppers, lamb or chicken steamed hot,
Olive oil, potatoes roasted, butter smeared a lot,
Wine milk or mead to wash it all down,
Not a drop, morsel or fragment will drop to the ground.

Dumplings and potato cakes, apples fresh and new,
Fish broiled and baked, sausages and barley in stew,
Carrots, leeks and cabbages, so tender and mild,
Spices, duck and olives served with rice, how wild!
Cider, fruit and sweet waters will wash down all desires,
And the bellyful of savory joys, conquer rumbling fires.

Eyes shut with visions, memories bright as day,
So real it seems, just a fingertip away.
The cup in the hand with cool water, fetid and vile,
Tis the lucky man with a fish head, he greets it with a smile.
Maybe a piece of turnip, sad cabbage leaf to meet,
But not even a salt to season water, let alone a scrap of meat.
Bread, maybe a chunk made with wood cast dust,
But crumbs of any kind, there's a stampede of rabid lust.

Hard labor, hard beating, sickness with no moratorium,
Creatures nearly dead, waiting for crematorium.
Stripped of all humanity, living as mere brutes,
Donkeys are treated like kings, we, stuffed down greasy chutes.
Think of food in bunks everyday as we lie,
No tears of pity left, we've only to wait and die.

The Baton

Come here my lad, let me tell you the tale,
Of how we are strong in a poisonous gale.
Decades and years before you were born,
Our kin raised golden wheat and glorious corn.
The pastures were green, the flowers so fine,
Rich honey on bread and sweet milk divine.
Cheese, hearty with bite and the wild game replete,
Peoples of east Prussia! No better could you meet!
Centuries of building, work, labor and toil,
Made our great home the Easterling's spoil.
They covet our soil, our proud horses upright,
Yet sword of our ancestors did set them aright.

In '14 they poured from their dens and their nests,
Vile beasts swept towards us as rabble and pests,
To seize our fair lands and fair women to wrest.
At Tannenberg we thought fast seeking only delay,
But Hindenburg's plan crushed them that day
Thousands upon thousands soiled earth with foul blook
Thousands upon thousands more, joined with the mud.
Samsonov took his life for his shame,
Zhilinsky fled as a cur but did not do the same.

Our pride swelled that day and many were singing,
The church bells in town could not help but ringing.
The filth and the fiends from Russia's wide steppes,
Were smashed wand kicked out in spite of their best.
'Til '19 we sat triumphant, eyeing the East,
But courage and fight had flown from the beast.

We signed an accord before armistice day,
And vast new lands came under our sway.
But traitors at home with black heats defied,
And 1919 saw that our great nation died.
Our lands in the east, Cameroon, Namibia took
Tanzania and Togo were lost with great rue.
Our nav was scuttled, our army no more,

‘Lorrain and the Ruhr, all rankled our core.

Oppressed as mere slaves, no timber, coal or food,
Black shame set loose to rape and spawn broods.
Our people and history seemed ready to fade,
Enemies stripped and sold, great profit they made.
Deeper and darker into darkness we sank,
And ’29 left us with no money in the bank.
Carts of marks to buy stale bread in rot,
When Bolsheviks came calling, our tempers grew hot.’

But from the ruin and decay, there arose a bold man,
that earned the iron cross in bravery for this land
He stood tall and strong and the traitors did name,
it was clear in his voice he would bring us great fame.
His plan was so thorough, his vision so keen,
The uniforms he gave us had a magical sheen!
The struggle of the strong, the purge of the weak,
The useless and wastrel, the unfit that we seek,
The sub-human and lunatic to our blood a great curse,
For mongrels and degenerates, no breast to take nurse.
He said we must grow and the great East reclaim;
We must conquer and settle or live with disdain.

The Jew, ah the Jew, the worst of them all,
For those in black uniforms, our most urgent call.
Our blood must be pure, our race noble and clean,
The Jew and the gypsy, n’aer again to be seen.
Our homes and our volk, our hearts must be firm,
But Hebrews and rats, fit only to burn.

Our duty is hard but we dare not go slack,
As we serve proudly, venom we must not lack.
The traitors of ’19 and oppressors we knew,
We take back what’s ours then break them in two.
To East we do sweep to scour and make neat,
A camp and a furnace for the insects we meet.
The squatters in Poland and roaches of Stalin’s crew,
Millions must fall to claim our just due.

But something went wrong, Ivan’s a much tougher beast,
He did not break but was bloodied at least.
Demons from the East and men from the west,
Force us to hasten our great task before rest.
Though ashes of millions and bone ground to meal,
Too many survived despite deaths joyous peal.

The savage from the steppe engulfed our green land,
Left bloody foul see, the Mongol's own brand.

Slaves to the East and starved by the West,
They wanted to destroy our brightest and b est.
My pride is here but my Prussia is gone,
Our land and our history West of the Don.
Divided and crushed, brainwashed and bled,
The traitors remain, no matter we sped.
Now comes your day, my boy and grandson,
To wake the great spirit and show the fist of the Hun.
I kept my uniform so black and replete
Its epaulettes glitter and thunderbolts sleek.
An oberst with distinction, bandenkampf my mission,
The pure blood from foul to partition.

The grandson, paused pursed his lips and eyed,
His grandfather and story before he replied.

I think, grandfather, I will go home now,
The murder of women and children, I see not how!
The beauty of that land, its glory its grace,
Has innocent blood shed all over the place.
I am filled with shame, horror and regret,
I'm saddened at the loss of faces never met.
The anger and the hatred I do understand now,
For the victims and slaughtered we owe a great bow.
That uniform's a hangman's, no part do I want,
For the rest of my days those deeds 'gainst me haunt.
My girlfriend is Jewish and my best friend too,
Their hearts and souls are bright, loving and true.

Genocide of the Namibian People

I

Heat and sand ‘cross this burning land
Rail and tie, spike and tar we move by hand.
Women and children, boys and men, lift and space,
To question this toil is never our place.
Luderitz Aus, build it we must.
We live with German neighbors, now in ashes our trust.

How many Herero worked here and died?
Like unnumbered tears, see the mounds to the side.
Given a number on a tag of tin,
When one of us died, just use it again.
Trotha took our pride, Ratzel said we must move,
Fischer said we were oxen that our skulls would prove.

Our people were a nuisance, our culture naught to give,
If we could not labor, we were useless lives to live.
No hope, no future, no life to pass on,
Day after day for hours labored with brawn.
For Germans, now, we are beasts not to sleep,
Gaze into children’s eyes, we can only but weep.

II

What a flower is Swakopmund!
Bright with color, quaint and filled with life.
People from distant lands come to sit and soak in the sea.
The numbers on buildings mark such glorious years,
1904, 1905, and shine bright gold!
How marvelous! The German built life here!
How spectacular! Business gave order!

Pride in history and adorned with accomplishment,
Rail brings goods, roads bring people, ships to and fro,
Yet, though history forgets, the dead do not.
Cattle cars with people (efficiently stuffed to fill),
Railroads and harbors built with dying hands,
Tagged people with numbers, broken hearts and backs,
Lie denied their place in sorrow, but are glad
To know, their graves are jump-ramps
For tourists on ATV's in a cemetery
For thousands that do not exist.

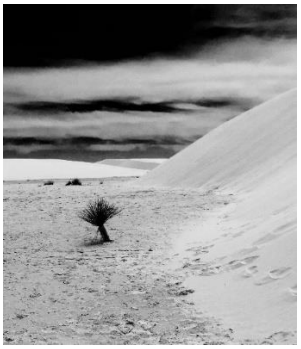
III

Shark Island! A forbidding name in the harbor.
Tourists flock to camp amidst its rocks and stones,
Its gnawing teeth.
The view of the Atlantic is enjoyed,
The tent stakes hammered into ground bones,
Fires built on memory's ashes,
Food and wine flow in plenty where
The peaceful town of Swakopmund lies close.

But ghosts abide here. Shark island consumed,
Consumed thousands…tourists of a different kind.
Herero and Namaqua, guest of honor
That left bones and souls that wind
And rain scrubbed clean;
Bodies fed to the Atlantic
When the island choked on what it had
And could eat no more;
New medicine given by Bofinger and Schultze,
And skulls given a place of honor on shelves in Berlin.

Shark Island, the permanent place to be!
Shark Island, Vernichtungslager,
Long forgotten to you and me.

IV



Our backs to the Kalahari!
We, the Herero, fought Von Trotha and his thousands.
Here at Oueverumue, the last water well lies.
The fight is over and terms will come
But they did not.

Von Trotha sent fire and iron, sword and bullet,
His terms, a befehl, kill all; women, babes and men.
Kill all! Cattle and herd, no quarter no surrender.
The door to the Kalahari was left open,
And we took it; we had no choice.
Thousands pursued by thousands into the heat.

No water, no food, people shriveled to skin over bone.
The merciless chase! We watered the Omaheke with blood.
Bones, our bones, gnawed by sand and
Picked at by beast until…a new befehl…
Let them live…welcome them back.
Warmly, we were received into cattle cars,
Air came at a price.

Jewelry was given to all, a collar with a number.
Sometimes reused again and again and again.
Each owner did not ask for it back.
Our payment was land, land for exhausted lives,
Into graves where names and places…
Are known only to a god.
Spirits in anguish,
forever wandering the paths of the dead,
shrouded in mist.

V

Lebensraum! Lebensraum! Our right and need!
Blood in toil, our farmers endured in Afrika.
Working to build, labor to feed, our race must thrive.
Our churches e shared with Herero and Nama.
Our hymns we offered and sang together.

But, they betrayed our generosity and spilled our blood!
They have land they are not fit to own or work.
Germany must not tolerate slanders from beasts.
Our governor tried to make peace but Von Trotha,
Von Trotha has arrived to set things aright.

We build railways and harbors, markets and towns,
We have superior culture not these squatters of brown.
Good German enterprise! We helped them grow,
How to work, fed them and gave noble purpose.
The land! The Land! Ours by right and destiny!
Now free of their waste, they embrace their rightful place.

VI

Lift iron rail you schornsteinfeger! I'll count to ten,
Fall down on line, and God help you, t'will be the end.
Hoist together swine apes, tis no time to rest,
Look at me again and I'll flog you to death.
Your limbs may hurt, back ache with pain,
Smile for the Kaiser! Celebrate his reign!
Your knee hurts? You lout! Your fingers do bleed?
That jaw I shall break, for speech you have little need.
Yet, sing me a tune, make it happy with glee,
Your collar tag's dirty, the number I can't see!
Menschenschreck! Shriveled udders, worse than a nag,
Tuck them in fast, haste! Like withered balls they do sag.
Young boys and girls, ripe for breed and moan,
Quick! Bring them to me, with my plow they will groan.
Look fast! White – necks flock and gather all around,
Their beady eyes are eager when you die on the ground.
The rail is placed and set, God only knows how,
Happiness through work! We Germans love you now.

The operators glory

All hail the chief! Brought before the court for murder, a war criminal!
But Ah! The bigger chief said no way, what you did was ok, needs a hooray, t'was minimal.

All is well! "Blade" they call you adoringly,
He that leaves combatants gaping, empty-eyed staring forlornly.

You must like to kill up close!
A tall repugnant thought for most.
Not to snipe, blast or smash, nor chop, drop or mash,
but with straight erect steel penetrate him at last.

Does it inflame your deepest arousal and joy,
To have slipped your stiff knife into the boy?
Did your union with him sate thy throbbing need?
To see the glorious rib hole suck air and bleed?
Did the mortally wounded on his youthful back,
Gape in awe as his failing body went slack?

True, he was a viruses pawn dancing with death every day,
With killers and rapists did play,
On innocents, pleading and helpless did prey.

True, a boy seeking to kill you is fair game,
No matter how young, stupid, misled or lame.
But a child, man or woman unarmed and ebbing away,
Earned you scorn when you rose satisfied that day.
A photo of his body while you grinned at his death pall,
Why his head's a perfect fit for your trophy wall.

But your team! Your team! Softies and traitors to spurn your treasured dream!
All operators that think you've done wrong, let death take them for rebuking your song.

Yet smile, relief has found you at last,
Your bone spur president, by him, ‘hero’ you’re cast.
All others ‘bracing duty, honor and rules,
Disgraceful, you sneer, in their uniforms, such fools.

But fear not, were my life liberty and reputation at stake,
You bet your sweet ass, all help I’d gladly take.
Your victory, rank, title and security to be sure,
And you must think all in all you’re quite pure.

You know the little ones grow to big ones to fight in the next war,
So kill them all, how honorable to be death’s eager whore.

Operators are trained to kill without remorse,
Overcoming all morals in due course,
A knife that drinks blood is never satisfied,
Its wielder, perhaps, hopes to be deified.
A man who throbs with a knife as such,
Is among those who enjoy war a little too much.
The perverse imp on your shoulder’s advice you did bade,
And the glorious title you took is ‘blade’.

The Penis Peddler

He stood before the weeping and grieving crowd,
To speak about Sandy Hook bloody and loud,
To offer solution to you and me,
‘twas simple and quite obvious you see.

The killer was a man of dark mind,
Who slew twenty lambs small and kind,
His own mother with her gun did slay,

And seven other good teachers that way.
Loading and shooting in each class,
Mangled small bodies piled in masse.
Lanza, with zeal, frigid and vile,
Ate his own bullet to escape ugly trial.
But for children who lied on to play,
Screams and shots repat from that day.

The salesman spoke in a voice so sure,
“For people like this, we have THE cure!
For tis plain that to stop his evil breed,
Our guns, the portable penises, we need!
For the gun is the power between a man’s legs,
And using one fast will stop human dregs.
This school, Sandy Hook, with its campus spread wide,
Invited the wrong kind of penis inside.
The murders and killings so often these days,
Urgently calls that more penises be made.
The answer is not to bar them from fools,
But strap on the big ones and merge with school rules.

Aroused and ready to train and provide,
Our steel penises shared, our potency guides.
Portable penises in schools and on teachers,
Deftly whipped out for disorder in bleachers.
Portable penises gripped firmly in hall,
The lunchroom and staffroom so chaos will stall.
Portable penises in gym and the lot,
No matter the winter the barrels blow hot.

We are proud and strong, focused and free,
No other foul penis shall force us to knee.
Our penises we share, compare and do cradle,
For holding it daily, we fill freedom’s sweet ladle.
One penis? No, at least three maybe two,
Long ones or short ones, fat skinny or blue,
To pump them with joy, Ah! To yank on the slide,
Penis with penis when wadcutters will glide.

Our rights are supreme, no restraint shall resound,
Though our families are slain or be moaning on ground.

To restrict is to folly, with penises you must sleep,
Or villain and fed will come poke you in sleep.

Penises! More penises! For me and for you,
Protecting little ones so they'll carry one too.
Penises! More penises! Not less you hapless sheep!
Come and hold mine, such raw power you'll meet!
Yes friends, no, clearly you must know,
Only with more penises will such tragedies slow.

The Hole Puncher

The glory of weapons what do they do?
Weapons so grand punching holes into you,
Stick or a stake pointed sharp and not round,
Thrust through the gut makes a ghastly gross sound.
The atlatl from ancients, flung with strong hand
Holing the chest with pitched screams oh so grand.
The spear flung and forced, with razor fine flint
Slices, goes deep, rending through with rose glint.
Arrows from bows, bolts from deadly cross bow,
Bites flesh, faster and swifter as they go.
Flick of iron knife, stab from flashing steel sword,
Cleaving, tearing and deep, as you cry for your lord.
Bullet and bomb, blow all insides clean out,
Guts and gore gushing, grotesque is the great spout.

Bigger, mangled holes are made so splendid,
Monstrous and ghastly the wounds to be mended.
Wood, bone and sharp stones, bronze, iron, and fine steel,
Laser, and night scopes, cannon rolling on wheel.
Bone and pink flesh a bullet's favorite meal.

Stocks, cocks and grips, balanced sighted and true,
Straps, slings, and silenced, chrome, matted or blue,
Crack, pop and roil, booming, blasting, recoil,
Thumping and thudding, spiting fiery turmoil.
Dead, wounded, dying, mutilated they fall,
War horn or hunt horn, hole punchers answer the call.
Power and strength in fine costly tools for gore,
Weapons wrought and wielded well make for great lore.
Machined and crafted well, so artfully made,
Elegant and ingenious in blood are they paid.

Yet….

Winged flit and flight, a barbed stinger straight and true,
Rosebush and blackberry, sharp thorns that punch through,
Nettles and Locust trees no skin will save you.
Sting ray a whip, Man-O-War a battle wagon,
Lionfish pikes, urchin spears and thorned dragons,
Bullet ant or wasp? reach for a medicine flagon.
The Porcupine's quill, the Hedgehog's defense,
Raptor's sharp talon's, a viper's offense,
Spider fangs deep? Need morphine's recompense.
The nature of life, to poke holes in the flesh,
For poison or pleasure, a phallic great mesh.

Still….

A Needle's swift seam, a suture swift stich,
Fishhook and fishline made strong with a hitch.
Gauges for eyeballs, punches for supple leather,
Drilled holes for shutter holds, to keep out the weather.
Backhoe for grave hole, dumped corpse in wood casket,
Axe swing and guillotine fills the straw basket.
A sharp trowel for rich soil, a pick for hard ice,
Jack hammer for concrete but not for gross lice,
Tractors and plows go down so deep and so nice,
Reapers and rippers, stacked corn for a good price.
Posts pushing through the nether sweet graces,
Ear lobes or hidden, tickling the right places.
Spikes with great mauls through tree and stout timber,
In the right mood, can make couples quite limber.
Staples grab quick, loose paper through shiny rings,
Great presses that pop, collates that crunch and cling.

Wearing or collecting a phallic ego hard thing

The task of the hole puncher, so simple a tool
Squeeze hard with a hand, that's how it's done as a rule.
Hole puncher yes, what a clever invention,
For hole punchers all, many kinds need not mention;
Hole punchers one, hole punchers all the same,
Obsession of hole punchers, a stupid great game.

The Good Old Days I

Yee whose hearts pine for the good old days;
Those who'd go back and live such great plays
Harken to me now, I smooth thy path
Ready thyself! Depart to glorious ways!

No vote was needed for the fair sex
Voices unheard, traditions to vex
Women said less, and told to shut up,
Learning no need, man's mind be not hexed.

Heart, house and power, male run homestead,
Women chaste and pure, obedient in bed.
At thy beckon and call, skirts all hiked up,
Discipline with force, wives godly led.

Children and youth, the belt not to spare,
School for young girls? No need for bride-mare.
Wife that enrages, grin with blood spit,
Man's divine oath to give loving care.

Church preaches guidance, lessons ordained
Man stumbles to sin, woman be blamed,
Right of wife, by her man not be raped,
Impossible! Lest god's will be maimed.

Woman that strays, tis the worst vile sin.
Man that roams, tis his nature within.
Sun's brilliant rays, shine thy golden path,
In your sexist world, no doubt you'll grin.

Hasten! I open your door to the past.
The way has been smoothed, quickly walk fast.
Tyrant o'er others, there, but not here.
This modern world, now rid of you at last.

The Good Old Days II

Sir Knight! To the Middle Ages you go!
Sword and shield to thy enemies bring woe.
But wait…knights of old, not quite what you think
Vassal lord to extort without blink.
Service to God tis beyond what you guess,
War, rape and theft with bloody gory mess.

Ah, the stench. To bathe was a Roman Vice,
Garden robes with straw, thy linens with lice.
Fresh water? What's that? Yes, bedbugs and gout,
Quack doctors and prayers, your teeth? Go without.
Corpse-stink hairy pits up hand and down below,
Watch your knightly spear, droop and never grow.

Pinworms and tapeworms, parasites galore,
Fungal fee, menstrual reek, weeping sores and more,
Pale, fatly priests, with lech'rous green eyes,
Slack withered breasts, ass dipped fingers in pies,
Long life, healthy life, maybe thirty with luck,
Plague, pox and wet shits to the grave with pluck.

Language then spoken, twisted mangled words,
Speak yee free thought, your heresy be purged,
Witch heretic and Jew, burned with bright flare,
Torture, purge all sin, but what do you care?
Wheel, boot and the rack, iron poker in hot glow,
Gibbet, noose and axe, great sport for black crows.

Dine well and full, grown fat with great might,
If god's grace be there, thy live this foul blight.

Good Old Days III

Back through time to the genteel days of yore,
Where b'ellum life was sweet with so much more.
Our nation was great then, claimed with belief,
Then back you shall go to live without chore.

Cotton, pure white, and bailed by darky black,
Bossman and cracker, no effort they lack.
Negros for sale, niggers you'd rather say,
Stock, hardly cheap, whipped if they dare slack.

Rights for strapping bucks? No need in the South.
Field hands have shacks, mammies work in da house.
Whips, brands and dogs, the proper ways will set,
He sass to the massa, scourge him to death.

God to the preacher, the slave was ordained,
Ham's sin from the bible, their curse shall remain.
Virtue so pure in the belles do reside,
The order of God, the South his domain.

Slave girl nearby, they respectfully bow,
If massa has a need, he'll whip out his plow.
If fertile she is an grows big from seed,
To auction they go, two slaves sold as cows.

Riches so great, gentility so fine,
Comes with a price, so tasty like sweet brine.
Money it will take, money you must have.
Lest wretched you are to live by sheer crime.

Your jacket removed to do so is dread,
The stench of his sweat, this more like the dead.
Water? No way, only strong drink will do.
Teeth at the dentist? no morphine it's said.

Cholera, yellow jack, life will defeat,
Pellagra, small pox their feasting replete.
No air in the house, cooled as we do now,
Hands after privies shall handle your meat.

So quickly, to the land of white cotton,
Your places is there for your heart black and rotten.
Spooks, ghosts and church, all powerful white male,
Gods be praised, you'll be dead and forgotten.

The Confirmation

Senator Session, there you sit, upright and proud

To serve with righteous justice! You are Alabama's
Sword, steeled and tempered to perfection. You need
No oath to bind you as chief prosecutor. With what
Joy and relish you dip your blade happily into the
Corrupting, immoral, profane and criminal.

But, tis better you don a mask. Too tight does the
Skin stretch across that face and gather
 in furrowed sloughs at the borders, an erupting head from
foreskin aroused to frenzied pitch. Even a ravenous wolf
shudders at those beady reptilian eyes seeking prey.
Only a hyena understands the bared brown stumps
Revealed when those thin lips draw back.

Wherefore does this raptorial arousal whore your heart??
What source suckles its gulping thirst?
It's obvious! The painted demon in your dreams
Bides you to kneel before him,
Bides you join your parched lips upon his swollen fountain.
There, you slake your voracious thirst by milking and gobbling
His foaming river.

But for the love of God be not greedy!
Has not the journey with thousands bearing walking sticks
With wrinkled sacks not been enough?
Alabama may have been your glorious buffet,
But to clasp the entire nation? With respect to your
Righteous law, gluttony is considered a sin!

The Righteous Evangelist

Solemnly, the preacher stood and to the pulpit went,
There to address his flock, holy energy, not yet spent.
His spirit would soar like last week he knew,
For calm peace and pleasure would again flow through.
Eyes rolling back with a deep sigh he began,
Involuntary smile, thee tingling nerves so grand!

“Good friends, today is a glorious day!
‘tis time to feel glorious, ecstatic as we pray!”
And slowly, with focus, his eyes began to rise,
And preach he from the scriptures, righteous and wise.
His grin grew bigger; he swayed to and fro,
And relished the heaven inside of him grow.

“The pain of our lord Jesus suffered for us,
The agony, the sacrifice…honor we must!
The freethinkers, liberals and false bearers of light,
Guard fast your children ’gainst the vile sodomite.
Hypocrites! Hypocrites! Servants of Gog!
By god, guns and guts to hell will they trod!
No prayer in schools, feminists and whores of damnation,
Abortionists, evolutionists, free love and libations!”

Then sudden his face so measured and fine,
Twisted in pain and uttered a whine:
“No more! no more! I feel pain like fire
Agony dear Lord, this was not my desire!”
His hands white knuckled, gripping as he stood,
Then slammed his fist hard on the Bible and wood,
His face bright blood red, teeth clenched so tight,
“For the love of Christ almighty, please do not bite!”

The people raised hands and swayed them in air,
‘twas plain the holy ghost dwelt among them there.
Amen Amen people praised loud with a shout
“For the love of God!” he shrieked, “this pain rips in and out.”
His tears like rain streamed down his cheeks,
Eyes bulging out as he gawped to thee mee.

His hips jerked sharply, waist bucked high and low,

The veins swollen large from his dead down to the toe.
“No more! no more! the pain I cannot bear!
Can you not hear me plead? I’ll be ripped up down there.”
At last he gasped with a wince of release,
Now with sharp agony he must make peace.
The crowd all swayed moved by his spirit so true,
While he limped to his chair…below black and blue.
His wife on the front row, rapturous and proud of him,
Tonight, she would ride his most holy vim.

Week after week, the glories had flown,
The secret muse he savored had never been blown.
When all in the church had at last departed with care,
He came back to see the cause of his great despair.
He glared at the pulpit and approached it with rage,
Out from within it emerged no gentle sweet sage.
A lanky pale man, came out picking his teeth,
Not his usual to be sure for he got no relief.
“You bit and you grated, you nipped like a sharp pin
I’m a man of god to do that’s a sin.”

Grinning, the man showed his broken yellow teeth,
And sported a red darting tongue escaped from its sheath.
Wincing as he walked out, he could say no more,
But that’s what you get with an ungodly whore.

Resurrection of the Duel

He pried the stone slab from its dead forgotten tomb,
The crypt long silent in the blackened deathly room.
Laws to put to rest the cure for insulting breath,
Sharpened steel or lead ball with paced out early death.

But a prize still there for honor bound vengeful men
Blood gurgling gasps, shrieks or pitiful moaning din
21st Century people in wrathful states,
No quarter asked or given in any US states.
Thousands to millions get stirred to a frenzied rage,
Pen, screen and keypad always a vindictive page.
Killers unstable with bombast and loved guns,
Psychos and pundits spewing tropes and great puns.
Wagons are circled, masks and caution tossed aside,
Tear up the world, burned down joyfully from inside.
Left rendering to ash, erase and censor to grey,
Right place the yoke, your obedience and to 'prey'.
Our god, the stove and bed a woman's only lot,
The free and colorful, all vile ruin left by Lot.
The nation all racist, a good thing it has not.
The middle is bad, all neutrals to despise,
Choose quickly your side our nation to revise,
Strike down the other to stop our country's demise.
Smiling with glee, he now found the best cure
Racing back home he penned out the best lure.
Quickly to the left and quickly to the right,
Shut your loud blow holes and show your true might.
Take your steel blade or pistol good and true
Paces a ten, holes in heart or head straight through.

Free Association During Covid

Do we love only when someone is gone?
Do we linger only when we are empty?
Why are the heartstrings awakened and tugged?
When no mortal danger or doom seems near?
Why the ache when surrounded by those you love
What fear of loss, what creature unleashed?

Anguish at panic that love is not shown
By thy own hand that you cannot understand.

The time that passes day after day surrounded
by pestilence that entombs us all inside,
Yet days on end the unhurried pace the same
Does not step closer to build the love that is.
Do we cherish who we love, do we feel deeply,
Only when the threat of loss becomes real?
Is Routine the opium soothing fear?
Is habit the balm for the anxious?
Or is loss to terrible to suffer thought?

Love without fear, joy without being made stone,
Life out from under the earthen lid of death,
Laughter despite the image of an empty chair,
Song despite the nightmare of a lonely bed,
Stories despite the spectre of a silent voice,
All life freely given and raised above hauntings,
All love lived daily without ceasing,
For the starlight wings of the butterfly shall send love
Rippling unceasingly beyond the claw of eternal night.

Allegory of Plato's Cave: Updated

The shadows danced on walls without frill,
The world as it is was seen inspired with great thrill,
There they all sat of like mind and like kind,
And a wall to block out all light and all chill.

One man left and from dark mouth emerged,

Into the light and all falsehoods now purged.
The chains of his bonds and blindness now snapped,
From the prison of ignorance his freed mind now surged.

Light in the world, the reality of bright day,
His companions he then told ‘twas folly to stay,
The cavern now revealed its snares now exposed,
Truth and fact quite real but not shadows lay.

Teeth bared with rage, threat of swift death,
Nay! Deceit and sheer horror, chaos only they sayeth.
One man insane, his fell words but lies
To fight they for shadows until their last breath.

Come now the age of magnets and electricity,
The stories, the tales, made worlds of duplicity.
The power of keystrokes and sounds in years that do please,
Of games, war and romance wrapped in felicity.

People with screens and headsets to match,
The lights and the shadows and stories the catch.
Visors and dimensions surrounding all fields,
Engrossed and involved, to this realm do they latch.

Universe, time and place to begin,
The opening is wide, infinite space there within,
No thoughts or concerns, life struggles relieved,
Walls there to block, to disturb becomes sin.

A reality made and delivered refined,
Back to the shadows they run in like mind.
Those in the sun who warn of a cave
Fight ‘gainst the power of the willfully blind.

They who are pulled to the world of illusion,
Their senses ensnared by delightful delusion.
They snarl and they fight, by choice do they stay,
From light back to dark, they abide no intrusion.

A Question of Reversal

The question gets asked:
If you could have done something differently,
Again, or not at all, would you do it?
What a question.
Good for some perhaps but certainly not all.
But, if that choice were made,
All that is may no longer be,
What now is good may be no more.
All that remains might of evil stay
Or joy depart and anguish bring.
What lives we know, forever changed,
Of good or bad, none can tell.
The child you have the children at home,
To cease to exist is a risk quite grave.
The path made over, new journey set forth,
Where could it lead, not down the same.
One choice begets the next and fans out forever,
Not one in isolation can what you now know repeat.
If what is can be undone, then
What was done could never be.
What was redone could we never know,
For desire came from what has been,
Not what has been undone.
What would be undone would not be known
Nor its paths unwound.
The present would seek no change
Or more than are now sought,

For the butterfly wing that flaps,
All ripples cannot account.
To seek to change the past,
It cannot be undone.
The present course, its path on the past is firmly sound.
No change can win without risk of joy or of grief
But unknown would be the changes a merciful kind of ‘relief.
To me, all that is, the choices
That were made, joyful and painful together make the past my future laid.
To learn from what was, the reason things were so,
To choose a better future, to think and live and grow.
To love the joys that are,
The people that now are, the lives of today
Their chance to live and shine, they shall their wings flit
And ripple forth things that shall be,
Be grateful we cannot undo that which has been done,
Since our own fate could by them be undone,
A world of chaotic choices, infinite tries of re-do, not for one
But for billions who could do the same.
To think of the consequences…one needs a drink.

The Gift on a Calm Mid-Summer’s Night from a Dying Pet

I hear the return of voices,
But mostly I hear you.
I know you are near,
So I crawl out from my spot for you.
Although I seldom talk anymore,
I will talk to you.
I am old, frail and unwell,
You hear me and understand.

The air outside is cool in my carrier.

Though I don't like the place we go
You are with me and I am re-assured.
They run their tests and tell you
What I already know.
Others are here that I know,
But I only wish to be in your arms.
I will purr for you.

I hear your heart, know your voice
And am calmed by your scent.
I will purr for you.
I am weary.
But I purr for you.
Other hold me but they are not you.
I only purr for you.
I am sleepy but happy in your arms,
At peace against your breast,
My eyes are heavy,
But I purr for you.
I will sleep now, but purr softly
With your heart, your tears warm me.
My purr should comfort you
For it means I love you.

Three sides of the same coin

Two men sit by a fire in shadowed deep forest of green,
Soft breezes above shake spid'ry tendrils dark and unseen.
Belts of glitt'ring stars dart tween shields forge of pale cloud,
Near and far echoes haunted screech of lunar owl.
One man turns to friend, face bright with half-seen glee,

Harken thee well brother, my vision to see."

Ah dear brother, breathe the air, close your bright eye,
Nature…'tis a glorious great golden price.
See how wholesome how harmonious how heaven sent,
The symmetry so marvelous, so magnificent,
No waste, the cycle continuous and complete,
Colors and shapes, a craftsman's creation replete.
The contour and curves of the towering trees entwining,
Great stout arms stretched skyward with dark wind sighing,
Branched hair brushed by breezes, swaying and alive,
Leaves live then die, fall to the earth, so many may thrive.
The cleverness of creatures to dodge or catch in sly act,
The bombast and play of cubs, birds and sleek cats,
Canyons an mountains, valleys gossamered green,
Seas and great oceans, fleet finned residents are seen
Birds have their nests, holding high up and strong,
Some in wood walls where no enemy can wrong.

Spiders weave webs, a dream of symmetry,
Fibers so strong, even the swiftest can't flee.
Elephants mighty, that can scent water far away,
And crowd round bleached bones to feel one that's died one past day.
Tigers with massive paw, like a boulder can crush,
Yet catch a mall fly and let it go with gentle touch.
Deep in the depths, angler fish with moon glowing cool,
Lungfish wrapped in earth for years, waiting for wat'ry pools.
Dolphins, such brilliance, kind and rich in play,
Whales, their haunting songs, are heard from long away,
Saharan ant, saved by silv'ry coat,
Monkeys that dive and swim in any wat'ry moat.
Bonobos ruled my females, a peaceful lot, think on that,
Primates that sign and laugh kangas that box you flat,
Corvids that toil with tools, solve puzzles adopt a helpless cat…

All the world works in patterns from tiny to might tree
If flows and ebbs in great order there for all to see.
Ives live in balance, no more no less, it's a fact.
So much we can learn and grow from which we lack.

Pausing and smiling with still a gracious grin,
The speaker breathed deeply, well satisfied within.
Silent with thought, he sighs and he reflects,
And waits for his words on his friend take effect.
Ahis friend, still silent, gazed into their fire,
Pondering the proud speech, considering without ire.

Slowly and slightly, at the hot coals does he poke,
And looking up keen-eyed, softly he spoke:

"Truly, sights, sounds and scenes, the variety so bold,
The magic and the marvel, so much that's yet untold.
Earth bids her creations to dance, sing and sway,
To swarm, swim or sink, fly, burrow or play,
To run with sleek grace, to trap or ensnare,
To doge, twist and turn, live dangerously with care.

But all that is seen, tis not quite what it seems,
Only survivors are left, those few with the means.
Nature cares nothing, 'tis not kindly or cruel,
She sets up the meetings, arranges lethal duel.
Billions upon billions, from highest to the low,
Dance death with each other in order that they grow.
Trees struggle savagely to reach life giving sun,
Vines, streamers and stranglers choke the life out of some.
Injury is fatal, no drink is sure death,
Famished and feeble will quickly find their last rest.
Kingdoms of flora and fauna o'er time,
Deluged by waters and drowned in thick brine.
Fires turn to ash and frost shatters tree bones,
Earthquakes and mudslides mangle with great stone.
Legion upon legion on land and in sea,
Fight to survive, to eat or be eaten or flee.
Cowbirds and cuckoos to lazy their bastards raise,
Wasps that behead bees, whole colonies they raze.
Garter snakes and rough newts, who shall win the deadly race?
Sea Otters rape Penguins, lemurs kill with savage pace,
Dogs, foxes and wolves leave dead uneaten scores,
Driver ants and locust hordes pick clean and must have more.
Even mini-microbe by millions mill around,
Silently helping heal some, others drag dead to ground.

Yes, in death, indeed there is no waste,
Bones rendered meatless, made to tasty paste.
New face in a new place wipes out ancient and strong,
Countless claimed by mere chance, now dead and long gone.

Narrowing his eyes, the man's gaze his friends met,
for there was one thing untold, not spoken of just yet.

We speak of the same thing although differently,
There's one left unsaid, a disgrace for you and me.
Nature takes no sides, yet deals many a joker wild,

The joker now present is quite destructive and not mild.
With reason to think and creativity unmatched,
To love, learn and build or torch, all with a match,
To lay claim over all, such hubris and great power,
And drive species to memory in mere hours,
Aye, nature sits aloft on the edge of her coin,
The duals are all set up, each other's lives to purloin.
The Red Queen, my brother, the usurper of our vision,
Bids us run all we want; she laughs with her derision.

He fell silent, resigned but peace as he sat.
His companion sadly stared, having heard all of that.
Their fire danced gracefully with mystic spiked hands and blazing feat,
While the dead wood cracked and whistled like old bones at their feet.

To Baby Liam Whom I Saw but did not Know

A cherub, how soft was your look!
Eyes filled with wonder
Your life so bright, so new,

What joy in being alive
Surrounded by smiles and love.
Rosey are your cheeks and a smile with pursed lips.

Grief stricken are the joyful;
Faces round you that shed
Love to heal and tears of anguish within.
Your hair was full but now only wisps,
As the night that saw your light arrive
Slowly draws you back.

The world is a terrible weight

On those that love you.
The doom that waits on your sweet light
Becomes a pillow of rest.
Those who see you scream within,
Lie shattered from the fate
That rests its unflinching hand
Upon your soft shoulder.

Your voice like the sun of spring
Melted the hearts of our winters,
Renewed the hearts that age
And astonished with the swift
Brilliance of your being.

Now, the star has been spent.
The radiance of your face
Shown too briefly,
The night welcomes back to its bosom.

Short prose

The Crossroads 1945

Heading South:

The former prisoners in the threadbare stripped suites and caps slowly hobbled down the paved road towards Enns. The younger man, sporting a dirty pink triangle upon his breast, helped an elderly Jewish man who had a tattered yellow star of David. Both wore ill-fitting shoes they had found to replace the wooden clogs they had constantly re-issued to victims that had no need for long term use. They were from Mauthausen, the Knochenmühle, the bone grinder. Their hands were ruined and well on their way to early arthritis from the quarry slave labor generously provided by the Nazi regime.

One of the pair was an old man, a wizened Jewish rabbi named Levi, that was a ghastly pale and cadaverous in appearance. With cheeks and sunken eyes, he seemed to be a set of walking sticks covered by skin. He had lost nearly all his teeth from malnutrition and the blows of truncheons. His prisoner's uniform of sagging, threadbare rags was in ruins after continuous re-issue to countless previous owners. All of the previous owners them had died unknown, like his tears, and been turned into elemental ash. He, for all practical purposes, fit the definition of a muselmann. Somehow, had been snatched from the jaws of death at the last moment with the approach of the American third army and given him a slim chance to live another day.

The younger man, Wilhelm, appeared only marginally better in health though he had once been an art instructor in Vienna. He had survived much better than many other prisoners by being close to Ernst who wore a green triangle. Ernst had been a Kapo, a career criminal and now was an ardent communist until the next opportunity for survival came along. Wilhelm knew, however, that liberation from the Nazis would bring only a different and more traditional persecution for those wearing pink. Through fits of coughing through blackened teeth, any physician would have quickly realized that the spots of blood adorning the front of his smock were from tuberculosis. The greatest source of difference between Wilhelm and Levi seemed to be the spirit of caring that the younger man exhibited that gave him purpose and focus to survive. The old man was still searching for a reason.

The surrounding countryside of this part of Austria was largely untouched by the war. Green trees swayed in the wind and wheat rattled their tassels as if the world had never heard a shot in anger. Abandoned personal effects, broken carts and personal effects dotted the road. In the fields, however, only a few skeletal carcasses of dairy cows and dismantled fences indicated that something was amiss. Any other livestock was long gone and had been relegated to the stewpots of roving bands of soldiers or desperate refugees. From a short distance away, they noticed these cows had been stripped to the bone. Many bones were broken, not by shells as the pair of men knew, but by the promise of iron rich marrow that could be found within. It was a perpetual race among the starving. It was a race between human and natural scavenger to be first to the body. They passed a desiccated hound and shuddered at the sight of the skull that had been bashed in and bones strewn about on the ground. Both Levi and Wilhelm had seen worse where pieces of humans had been removed by edged instrument. It was unclear to them whether they had met their end from of a bomb, bullet, SS guard or, more hideously, another starving person.

A short distance from the road, a barn's roof still smoldered where it was burned out. The stone frame still stood with gaping black holes for windows and walls riddled with bullets. They knew better than to look inside since one such venture had led to the discovery of scores of charred human remains. Finding several pieces of cloth that had somehow escaped the inferno, the result had been prisoners herded and executed. No children's bones were never ever present; they had already been liquidated years ago. Now, there were new reasons to not look in such places. They had heard reports of the roving Soviet soldiers seeking sport from the womenfolk. If one saw a woman's feet and legs stretched out on the ground and not moving, there was no doubt as to the horrors that had transpired before the victim had been released through death.

There was a crossroads just ahead. A girl of about five sat in the middle of the intersection humming to herself and playing with a scorched cloth doll that was missing an arm and had the hair singed. Next to her, a small boy of about three sat staring, gaping at nothing to some distant point and lost in a world inhabited by none but himself.

Unlike the girl's blonde locks, he had a shock of brown tangled hair. His entire body was coated in a fine white dust except for his eyes and open mouth which made him resemble more of an oversized China doll than a living boy. His eyes were exactly that of a doll's eyes. Twenty feet away down the East Road was an overturned cart with several female figures twisted in death. An old man was pinned to the ground with a bayonet through one of his eyes, a bloodied groin and something bulging from his mouth. As Levi and Wilhelm looked at the scene, they knew what had happened though whether the two children before them had been part of that group was unclear. Turning their attention back to the children, the men stopped by the two young ones.

Heading North.

A lone G.I., a new replacement, loosely cradled his rifle as he escorted an older man, who, in turn, was guiding a youth with bandaged eyes. Both the older man and youth were in ragged German army uniforms. Unlike the blue-eyed G.I. replacement who was in a fresh uniform, the old man had a weary look in his face of someone resigned to his fate at the hands of the conqueror. They were headed to a prisoner collection center at Mauthausen.

The G.I. nodded to the former concentration camp internees but the old man dropped his eyes to the ground. The GI also saw the overturned cart and turned pale. He was new to the war and had never been prepared to see the atrocities done to civilians or captured prisoners. These three also stepped into the crossroads and looked at the children.

Heading East

Two brown clad Asiatic Russians were escorting a young man donned in a black uniform, an SS. The soviet soldiers saw the GI and smiled broadly. They showed their forearms with many watches taken from captured Germans or bartered for some other prize. Seeing the children, they knitted their brows in puzzlement. They saw the macabre seen just in front of them but showed no emotion. They pushed the SS man into the crossroads and stopped. No one approached from the East.

For many moments, no one spoke or moved. No one seemed to know what to do, so all eyes fell upon the humming little girl. Finally, Wilhelm spoke to the girl in German, "why are you here child? Where is your mother? Your father?" He waited patiently knowing what the answer probably was and cast a glance to the cart with the deceased civilians.

The girl did not look up but her blonde tresses fluttered with the breezes as she spoke, "I don't know where papa is. He went to fight and hasn't come home. Mama said he was in Italy but that was a year ago. Mama was killed yesterday when soldiers found us. Grandpa tried to help but they killed him."

The SS youth snorted with contempt and spat to the ground with a mocking grin, "that's what you would expect from an Ivan." He tilted his head towards his captors as if to prove the point. The Soviet soldiers glanced at their prisoner with dark looks. They didn't understand German but they understood the word Ivan and the tone of contempt. Wilhelm, by coincidence, understood Russian and English.

Wilhelm, sick of the war but having no sympathy for his former captors, especially the SS, immediately translated to the two Russians, "He says your people did it because you are all animals. He says that you would sell your own mothers and children to whorehouses for a few kopeks to buy bad vodka."

Both Soviet soldiers faces turned incandescent with rage and they gritted their teeth and each cuffed the prisoner drawing blood from his nose and lip. The SS prisoner recovered, then laughed with bitterness, "see, I have given up their secret! They all are animals seeking the next pair of legs to split."

Wilhelm did not get a chance to translate. There was no need to. The two Soviet soldiers guessed well enough another insult had been delivered and struck him violently in the gut with the stock of one of their weapons while the other used his to send the unrepentant prisoner to the ground with a broken nose. The prisoner groaned and said nothing further.

One of the Soviets turned and angrily spoke to Wilhelm, “Tell the little girl that things will not go well for him very soon and he will never see his homeland again. SS will never go home. We have sons and daughters too and love children. We miss ours dearly and weep for the loss of your parents.” Dutifully, Wilhelm translated and all waited to see what the girl might do.

At first, she made no reply but then spoke, “Does God love us? Mama said he does but I don’t believe it.”

She resumed playing with her doll as calmly if she had asked for ice cream. The translator was taken aback, blinked uncertainly and tried to make sense of what he had heard. This was such an unexpected question that was difficult to answer not only for himself but for everyone. How was he to tell a child? The old Jew and older man in the German uniform simply lowered their heads in silence. The SS youth scoffed which earned him a swift kick in the ribs, but the arrogance and confidence had evaporated. The translator relayed the girl’s statement uncertainly.

The confused looks on the Soviets and GI for a moment left them speechless. The G.I. was the first to speak and gently but firmly told her, “Of course he does! He loves us all and especially the little children.” The Soviets, while having their own mixture of Eastern Orthodox and shamanism in the communist state, nevertheless nodded in agreement. The SS man made no sound but the occasional cough and groan.

“I don’t think so,” replied the little girl continuing to play with her doll, “he killed his own little boy because he was angry. Why did he kill his own son? Mama said killing is done by bad people.” She paused and looked at all of them, “Do you kill people?”

Wilhelm was so shaken by the girl that he whispered causing the others to lean closer to hear him. No one seemed to know how to answer the girl who was asking brutal questions that no child should have to ask. At length, one of the Siberian Russians knelt and produced a ragdoll from his satchel and gave it to the girl. She thanked him and smiled at him, with a warm melting smile that only a child could give. She immediately made the dolls sisters. “What’s her name? asked the girl to the soldier. “Misha”, replied the soldier who seemed to understand the German word for name. The girl was delighted, “Now Ingrid has a sister!”

The Russian tried to give the boy a piece of bread and the GI stepped forward to give the children chocolate. The boy, however, lost in some world beyond them, remained fixed in his catatonic gaze.

“Too much war and death,” Levi said softly in grief; the elder German soldier nodded sadly in agreement. The young American was agitated and visibly upset. He was not prepared to deal with a question from one so young. Nothing in his Midwest Sunday schooling had ever taught him how to cope with a world of death and destruction that mangled the spirit and body and spared no living thing. Somehow, giving the memorized lessons he’d been taught would be insulting and naïve compared to what was etched in the psyches and bodies of all these people.

The G.I.'s elder prisoner spoke, "This war has killed several generations. This war has doomed the spirits and hopes of the very young. They are old already and shall never know the joy of childhood."

"Do you think God cares?" asked the little girl. The G.I. drew in his breath and felt a little bit more confident in this question and he began to speak. The words died at the tips of his lips. All of them froze in alarm and confusion. Weapons and eyes were raised and searching in all directions but there was nothing to see for hundreds of yards. There were only pastures and the tree lines were far away. The SS youth went sheet white.

Faint but distinct hoarse laughter echoed all around them and even above them. There was not a soul to be seen anywhere. It was a single mocking laugh that seemed to reverberate and echo as if they were in a stone hall.

Suddenly, the erstwhile catatonic boy erupted into hysterical laughter to join that of the unseen. His was not a child's laugh of happiness or from some humorous event. It was a lunatic's laugh. It was the laugh at joke only the insane could understand. All present were jolted by the outburst and felt chills run down their spines and deep fear. All were visibly shaken. Wordlessly, they passed the children and one another hurrying on to their destinations. As they walked quickly, they glanced over their shoulders several times. When the groups had passed out of sight leaving the strange children far behind, the mirth of the unseen followed them for miles growing fainter.

Though all knew it, they did not speak it; God had answered

The Missionaries

The village was burned, cattle slain, women raped and crops destroyed from the never-ending ethnic struggles plaguing the country.

Mahmoud shared what he had with a hungry old man and his grandson.

A child was sick and Mahmoud carried him to the hospital for his mother. He stayed with them while the child slept.

An old woman's donkey refused to move and Mahmoud coaxed the stubborn animal to carry her load to market.

Mahmoud was a good neighbor, showed hospitality, gratitude, honesty and was passionate to help his people.

White missionaries came spreading the Gospel, Evangelicals from America. They came to save souls from sinful error and wickedness in the world. They brought services and aid which were gratefully accepted and appreciated. They brought Bibles, scriptural lessons, moral teachings and direction. Naturally, as the white man's burden dictated, a people steeped in ignorance needed a guiding light.

Mahmoud was away in Kigali learning to be a civil engineer to bring electricity and water to his village. He knew that enabling the people in his community to create changes on their own was a vital step forward. His partner brought knowledge to protect people from HIV and worked with aid agencies as a translator. When Mahmoud and his partner returned, the people were different; they did not smile or greet him.

After one of the church services, the congregation went to Mahmoud's house where he and his partner were preparing to show the villagers the changes they were bringing to improve their lives. They were greatly impressed and looked forward to the possibilities that might come.

Some of the congregation came on a different date, at night, to pay a visit.

Change did come to the village.

Amidst tears and farewells, the American evangelists said their goodbyes to a still rapturous and enlightened congregation. The church was still full of peace and song as they drove away. The roads, electricity, plumbing and other improvements, important as they were, would have to wait. A more important mission had been achieved.

Passing a hill, the driver pointed to the electric pole that would now remain powerless for some time to come. Mahmoud and his partner swung in the wind with grotesque bulging eyes and protruding tongues. Already the crows were landing for the feast.

The congregation had been taught well. They had learned their scriptures well from the evangelicals who found Africa more fertile ground for spiritual rightness than back at home.

"They are God's people," said one with Joy, "To see the devil driven out is what should be happening back home. I heard in Uganda they make it a capital offense."

The driver glanced at his rear-view mirror and slightly narrowed his eyes. He understood English. It was a defense against those who came thinking the people in his country were ignorant. Generations of exploitation had taught many that people from overseas that came bearing gifts were not always what they seemed. These people were no different. They bought their way in with smiles and goods. Some foreigners came for wealth and resources. Others, like these, they wanted to harvest the souls of people, purge the wickedness and create righteous communities. They were succeeded. He smiled faintly but bitterly. "Savages," he thought and drove on to the next village.

The Execution: *a speculation on an unknowable experience*

Shackles of shiny steel clink with slow shuffle. Aids in uniform guide to the appointed alter. The alter of destiny, for transformation to certainty, whereupon his body and blood displayed before twelve. But this table is cold, a metal slab like the butcher's. Belts and straps will armor him to fight fear. His mind wanders.

"This room is cold, and the table is hard. I've herd they take the organs, will they cut me up? Serve me up to other bodies? Yes, I've heard they do that. Maybe I can help a kid…Burning. I wonder if they will burn me and put me in some potter's field with no name, no date, no history; or will they let me lie with thousands at Capt'n Joe Bird's place or some Hart Island; will anyone care?

I will be strong and brave; I can't show fear…or should I scream and twist? What comes after I know the good book says Jesus came back; I'm supposed to believe. But I've never met anyone that has come back. I want to believe…but everyone I know is dead. All these people want me dead. The straps are rounded leather; they give a little. That clock looks like the one I had in school…damn thing ticked away but took forever.

I remember grandmama, her good cookin', chicken, potatoes and gravy...greens. I wonder if I will see her. Will she be mad and tell me 'boy, you ought to have known better!' or tell me not to worry.

Look at the walls, cinderblocks with yellow paint, just like in school and church, nothing on these walls though, wonder when they were painted. Those people that died, will they say it's ok? Will they know? Will they throw me to demons? Will they ask why I am there? The light in here is shining on the clock glass…or is it plastic…I got to calm my breathing.

Everybody is always innocent they told me. All I did was go down the alley to take a piss. Saw the hammer in the garbage can…picked it up…. good claw hammer…then I saw the blood, the hair and skin stuck on it. I didn't know the kids were in the dumpster but the jury said I did. Man, they hated me…cheers went up when the foreman said guilty.

Nothing I said convinced them…didn't even know them. What the hell were they doin' in the alley…raped with a bottle and heads bashed in. They always need someone to pay. Guess this way is better than Mr. Woodfox in Louisiana and they cage they put him in…no way to treat a man.

These people look like statues in here. I don't like the chill I'm feelin'; too cold in the room. Wonder who'll get my cell, my stuff. I can face this; I can see everything because I'm alive.

It's too quiet, my ears are ringing. Have nothing to say…now the needle is in. funny, I don't even feel it. Wonder what it will be like. Will it hurt? Heard some of them really hurt, some come apart like Diaz in Florida or in Oklahoma. What if there is nothing at all afterwards?

I used to ride my bike from school. I should hate these people but I can't. I should hate the families but I can't. Bible says I can't. Jesus did nothing and they killed him. He told the truth. I did nothing and I'm here. I told the truth.

Eyes are heavy…guess they put in the first drug. The real killer is out there. Look at the bumps on the light up there…always a dead moth inside; damn it's bright!

I know I'm here; I feel it. I know it. I'm here. What is I? What was in the place? Who is home? I'm here…I…"

The drugs slowly coursed through the highway of his veins; the stone faced twelve watched; the phone call for clemency never came though his lawyers had tried. Rhythmically, the clock's second hand inexorably ticked away and like a slow mournful drum, the heart slowed.

The Mental Bog – a caution for bipolar

“If you must cross the bog,” began the old sage, “whatever you do, for the love of god do not cross when water rises; you will be signing your own death warrant. Note the lines on the trees, mark well the places where nature showed how high she has reached.

Fail in this, and you shall drown. Drink this! ‘tis medicine to help you see and perceive correctly as this bog…swamp…marsh plays games with those who do not understand it. It is a madness that comes from the very water, the air and all living things here. You, among other…many others, will have trouble with this journey. The bog is fraught with perils and treachery! The tonic will instill reason rather than madness that is sure to seep into your mind.”

The traveler steps forward in water and into eager mud. The waters slosh, spongy soils cling, mosses spring, roots ensnare and gummy clay-mud swallows deep. He thinks to himself, “Long is the journey and the path undefined but the bog must be crossed. The water in the waterskin is sweet but the tonic bitter and foul…I need it not.”

Onward now. The mud is thick and sinks low. Sometimes the mud is up to the knees and well-nigh impossible to escape. The waters lap at his thighs. The ground sinks deeper and one must push mightily to move forwards. The waters are at his waist, but it is not rising, the tree marks show the levels have not changed. The waters are to his chest but still, the waters do not rise.

A boatman with a passenger passes and look on with astonishment.

“What are you doing?!!!” he cries in warning, “you’ll drown!” “Yes, you’ll drown!” agrees his passenger who is also greatly alarmed.

“Nonsense,” the man in the water replies, “the waters are not rising so I am fine.”

“Where is your tonic, were you not given one and did not drink it?” they ask urgently.

“I do not need it!” the man in the water replies.

Dismayed, the boatman and his passenger watch then call out, “Let us help you into our boat.”

“Thank you,” the man in the water called, but I’m just fine.”

“You are going to die,” said one of the men in the boat shaking his head.

Helpless to intervene, the men in the boat stared for a few minutes more then paddled away.

The waters are to his neck, then his nose. But the waters have not risen so all is well though fatigue and darkness have set in.

“Something is not right,” he mutters through bubble in the water. Checking again, the lines on the trees have remained the same distance from the surface.

A rough hand grabs his collar and he is dragged into a boat. Sleep is overwhelming from exhaustion. When he awakes, he is in a house.

“Bathe,” a voice commands; the rescued man obeys and drags himself to a hand pump supplying the shower. The water is cold and shocks his nerves. The dried mud and grim have to be scrubbed with lye soap. In the end, their encasing grip is broken and send down a drain.

“Eat,” the voice commands. The rescued man devours a bowl of thick stew vegetable stew and bread, hungry beyond belief.

“Drink this,” the voice commands. The rescued man complies and consumes a bitter tonic, the one he refused to drink earlier in his journey. He washes it down with sweet milk and then water.

“Sleep,” the voice commands. Again, the rescued man complies.

For several days, this ritual is repeated until finally his rescuer, the voice, sits before him. “I am Raphael” he says, “Why did you try to die?”

“I didn’t”, replied the rescued man astounded at the question.

“You were drowning,” replied Raphael flatly.

“Impossible!” declared the rescued man, “the water never rose; the marks were upon the trees.” After a long thoughtful pause, Raphael smiled softly and stated, “you did not drink the tonic my friend Anthony gave you at the start of your journey.”

“No, I did not. I had no need of it. There was no storm, no rain, not even a current in the water. The tonic was vile tasting though had I for a moment perceived the water rising, I should have consumed it at once,” stated the rescued man.

Raphael rolled back slightly from his crossed leg position and looked skyward, “Aye! Woe to you had your steps been swifter than my hand! You tread upon the bones of many, who thinking the same, tossed their means of deliverance aside, and in so doing, died.” Pausing, he stood,” Come with me.”

The rescued man stood and followed him to the door of the house which was located a shore next to the bog. “Look out there to that big cypress tree,” he started, “the one with the owl house up its trunk. Walk to it.”

Though not liking the idea of getting wet again, the rescued man complied. He lowered himself into the warm waters of the bog and struck out towards the tree. Immediately, the muck, clay bottom and murky waters swallowed him to his knees. He pushed on and sank to his thighs, the chest. He paused and turned around to look at Raphael.

"Keep going!" shouted Raphael motioning his hand forward.

The rescued man sank deeper and up to his chin. Each step was proving impossibly hard to make as tremendous effort was required to extract each foot and move it forward. Trudging was out of the question. Finally, in alarm and exhaustion, the rescued man twisted about with his neck arched back to keep the warm swamp water out of his mouth. "Any further and I shall be drowned," he cried in dismay.

"Impossible!" shouted Raphael, "do you not see the lines on the trees? They have not changed and the water has not risen."

"Yes! I see them," squawked the rescued man struggling to speak, "but I am sinking into the water and it shall be the death of me if I continue. I can barely get my foot up each time as it is!"

"Then come back!" shouted Raphael.

The rescued man, with considerable effort, turned and laboriously struggled back to the small house. Raphael watched passively and offered no aid to lift him on the porch, much to the rescued man's irritation. He collapsed, exhausted into a slimy, clay covered heap.

Raphael stared at him intently then spoke, "you are one of those people who cannot see the danger until it's too late. Water will rise and fall. Mud can be shallow or go deep. Solid ground may rise or pits and ravines be hidden in the murk. Likewise, currents from tides can rush in and sweep you away or downpour catch you in a place you cannot get out of in time. Sometimes sinkholes open and swallow ground, trees and everything up. There are any number of ways that water may rise and fall.

But the danger is not from the water rising, it is whether you can keep your head above the water and not drown.

There are many who lose their way and cannot see the difference. You were given a tonic to help you perceive the dangers, avoid confusion and danger. Yet, you chose to ignore it.

You did not have the wit or sense to realize that though the water may never rise, you might sink.

This is a simple difference most people readily understand but you, and many others like you cannot. This the reason why the tonic is given. Others tried to help you, yet you refused. Your enemy was not the water or mud or struggle, it was your own mind. If your mind is your enemy, woe to you. Take help when it is offered, knowledge when it is taught, and wisdom when it is shared.

Skulls with mud filled sockets and mouths lie in numbers beyond reckoning in places like this bog. Be warned. What seems perfectly natural to you may in fact be a creeping doom to betray you to death. Heed the aid and advice of those who know the dangers and how to guard against

it. Blindness does not always afflict the sightless and to the madman, the deadly seems perfectly normal and safe.

2019: A Suicide

A noise outside…probably a fender bender, but no, a cry from above. A star has fallen, fallen from 21 stories and now lies sprawled on the apartment walkway below. She's mostly nude save for a white t-shirt bunched just below the sternum.
A man below on the street frantically waves up at us saying "call for help" …as if any help on earth would make a difference from that height.

The head, her head…where is it? She seems to have struck the polished steel and rail along the concrete ramp. Is that her head wrapped below her right shoulder? But she's sprawled on her back. There is no pool of blood, no explosion of the whole. There are traces of her injuries scattered about where her head must have struck the steel.

Two women approach. One comes forward cautiously and takes a pulse on the neck. Why? Seems to be the thing to do. I call the police, apparently, the first to do so. I give my report…transferred…I give my report again to the new person. Transferred again. I give the same report to the third person. I can't declare here dead, let alone from ten stories up, but explain 'her condition is inconsistent with human life.'

People slowly gather in small number across the street, nobody knows what to do. There is no script here. For the love of God, I hope no children saw it or will see it. People no doubt process the sight of the deceased, unable to escape the raw fact of death…abstraction to de facto. Death's hand in flagrante delicto. They must observe and ask:

Who was she?
Did she fall, jump…or have help?
Is there blood?
Oh, the poor woman.
She's nude from the chest down.
Did anyone see it?

How high up did she fall?
Wonder if she had children.
Should we cover her?
\No, it's a police matter.
What a way to go.
I couldn't jump
I know someone who committed suicide…

No sirens. A police car arrives, then another. Both slowly pull up. I guess my description did the trick. They tape off the approaches, then a firetruck arrives. Finally, they cover her…procedure before dignity. Ah! Forensics arrives and they set up a tent…like a produce vendor or artist at a street market selling their goods. People would pay to see her if they could, some would take photos.

But alas! Some among the spectators present did take photos before the police arrived. Why did they do that? There is no crime in progress needing evidence to turn over. There is no need to try and identify the body by giving photos to investigators.

Will they post them online to circulate around the globe like perpetual radio waves?

Will they share them with friends in some mutual ghoulish delight?

Or perhaps keep it for themselves to contemplate ideas or fantasies in the secret crypts of their mind?

Why? After all,

she was someone else's child,
she was, perhaps, someone's sister or mother,
she was someone else's friend,
she was someone else's colleague.

It's reality tv come to visit in the flesh.
Maybe they think they'll send it to the relatives if they can find them…how thoughtful.
I bet they don't go to funeral homes to snap photos of dressed up corpses or sneak into the crematoria to watch them roast. No indeed! Though there are some that do.
That would be insensitive, rude and disrespectful. Perhaps this dead woman warrants special dispensation because she's nude, she's broken and twisted in death for all to see. Ah well, that's ok then and they can snap a photo when they think no one is looking.

People gather, stay a short time, then depart. The sun moves on. 'Tis natural to be curious of death since it's a guarantee for all and most never witness it.

Earlier in the morning, buzzards had been nearby lazily riding the thermals, but they left before the fall and did not return. There were, however, two buzzards sitting in chairs across the street

watching. Others in apartments looked out to observe then went back inside. These human vultures had an ideal spot on their third-floor porch…their cozy perch…with a commanding view. When the fire engine arrived, they adjusted their chair; when a forensics tent was erected, adjusted a little more. The roost was virtually immobile all day save for the dash to the bathroom and to bring back snacks.

All day, they drank in the sight of the dead woman. The gorged their senses on the human wreckage. They no doubt talked:

How disappointing they put up that tent!
Please don't park the engine where we can't see
Are they going to arrest someone?
Hope we get to see that!
She was probably drunk, maybe on drugs.
No underwear in the morning? Bet she's a call girl.
I'm surprised she's not all over the place.
Guess they'll have to go door to door to figure out who she is.
Hope these people keep their dogs leashed, wouldn't that be a sight!
That's a terrible thing to say! Just sayin'

Perhaps you should have taken a picture, severed the roots to your chair and waddled down to snap a photo. Perhaps you did. Did you get your binoculars for the 60-yard distance? Plant to hunt for souvenirs tomorrow? Perhaps a bit of skull or brain stuck on the mulch in the flower bed?

I wonder…if your child or relative were there dead on the street instead, would you welcome all the gawkers, the photos, the human buzzards, like you, that feasted upon her remains all day and into the night? Or would you be full of anguish and seethe with resentment?

The sun dropped below the horizon and an unmarked large trailer arrived. White, white like the full hooded suits they hazmat team wore. Every piece of skull and brain, every piece of mulch, every flower and plant in the adjacent bed, all yanked and replaced by dawn. They loaded numerous red bags, probably for incineration. The chemical washes and disinfectants were applied. It was a splendid job! So thorough, so clean! The walkway never looked so good. It was as if she had never existed and the actual suicide a mere figment of the imagination.

For months after, I looked at the spot, then up at the top of the building half fearing someone else would be in the process of plunging down. No one in our building ever really spoke of it. Death came calling and was made brutally real for all, there could be no words for this. Not for this kind of death in it raw totality.

Across the street, the buzzards were back inside, the thrill and novelty gone. They seldom showed and apparently had gullets filled to last them a while. Even the avian vultures that had been around never showed, apparently knowing they could not compete for the least morsel with the two death huggers in their chairs.

Each day thereafter that passed, it was as if the moment, the event, the victim had never been and indeed we never knew our neighbor's name.

Chasse au Renard Urbain

Older now and sitting in a discarded folding chair, the man shifted in the grueling autumn heat. His threadbare and sweat stained brown suit covered the gallery of the inked stained skin from youth. He is stygian black, bald and had the unfortunate trait of bulging jaundiced eyes from his Grave's disease. A pensioner from the city's water works, he now lives alone. Though his wife died several years back, he still wore his thin yellow gold wedding band, perhaps in comfort, with memory or habit. On the other hand, a freemason's ring. Many of his friends were long dead or serving time but a he still saw a few the Prince Hall masonic gatherings he attended.

Behind him, Kim's Rent to Own was packed with salvaged second-hand goods and had a variety of televisions on display. They were all set to the same channel and showed a program with an English Fox Hunt. The timing was slightly off among them and the sound of the horns and baying hounds created an eerie repetition.

On the street, children kicked a soccer ball while others etched art on the pavement with colored chalk. Older youths listened to the latest urban music practicing dancing moves while others judged. Grossly obese women sat on steps guzzling liters of cold sugar drinks, laughing, wagging heads and gossiping while braiding the hair of women, children and even a few young men into corn rows. There were a few men about. Two middle aged fellows went into Bishwaji's liquor and Smokes to buy lottery tickets.

Expressionless except for traces of sadness and anxiety, a twist on Emmet Kelly, he watched the activity on the street. Beads of sweat covered his head as he caught the whiff of cooking polish hot dogs and grew hungry. He knew Leon would be bringing his cart down the street with the click of his leg brace. Clarence would bring his popsicle wagon not long after. He smiled as one little girl kicked the socker ball around a determined boy and left him screaming in frustration.

He jumped at the sound of a police siren blaring on the adjacent street. He watched one police cruiser fly through the intersection then a second with K-9 on the side. He was relieved none of

the kids were in the intersection. They were going so fast. They would certainly have run over the ball. Would they have stopped for a child? A black child? It bothered him. 'Of course they would,' he thought. But would they stop because they had to and did they even want to? It disturbed him that he even had such thoughts. But they were in such a hurry to catch someone. Who was it? A drug dealer peddling a few ounces of pot? Maybe crack or meth? Maybe it was a thief or some brother beating his wife. Maybe she was just claiming he did. Maybe there was no emergency at all and they just wanted to move on. But racing to catch folks was nothing new. There were bad acting folks to go all around, both brothers and the police. No, must have been serious to go that fast. Cops have children too.

He felt anger but also ashamed to think police would just run over kids to go catch someone. But they were good at catching.

Glancing back at his neighbors, all eyes had paused to stare at the passing police car. The feeling in the air was palpable, in this area of town, there was always a hunt afoot. Sometimes there were dogs like on the tv chasing the rabbit, only these dogs went for men. The horns on the television blared again and clashed with the police sirens. Somewhere in this poor area, the foxhunt had begun.

The Operator's Glory II

All hail the chief! Brought before the court for murder! But the big chief said it was ok, so all is well. "Blade" they call you, ah! You must like to kill up close. Tis a tall order for a man to face another and skewer him. Slashing isn't enough, the ultimate kill! The penetration of another body with straight steel, does it bring ecstasy? Your team…something is rotten. Tight knit and deadly are the seals but so many turned on you…why? All of them soft but you? Others as trained squeamish or do gooders? Do they not like war enough or do you like war a little too much?

But no matter, you've a predatory president who protects a predator of men. He wears a suit, you wear a glitt'ring uniform adorned with ribbons. Don't forget he can pardon and his heart is

the finest of gold. He made you his champion, his gladiator; it's better to destroy the officers and men against you than have your life and career ruined. You're 'the blade' and that is power.

But fear not! Were I in your shoes had had life, liberty, and reputation at stake, I'd be grateful too. Id fight to be free and respected. I do not begrudge you that nor your satisfying victory. No doubt, the jobs will come after your retirement.

Trained from birth not to kill, steal or lie, trained in the Navy of truth, honor and respect, trained to be operators, lethal assassins, you are trained to set aside the humanity of others; kill without remorse or regret.

You are in the company of death, and are death's hand maiden. You are 'blade'.

The power to kill is seductive. It is said that even those who have no desire to kill would love to have the power. War is about killing and unleashing tools of death upon all who get in the way.

Enemies of the state and their ilk are different and fair game. Little ones grow up to be the next enemy and the women breed new fighters like rabbits. Without doubt, you'd have to kill them later anyway so the sooner the better. Perhaps you're doing us and them a favor?

A knife drenched in blood becomes insatiable in its appetite. Where does it stop? Does it never stop?

In war, troops fight for each other. But how can this be true when, not to put too fine a point on it, many of your unit reject you? When others of your profession, passionate, professionals with distinction and honor reject you, what are we to think? Tell me, for whom do you kill?

The Moon

Long before words, before phrases and song, long before the unspoiled lands of what would one day be nations and empires, before places like Leang Timpuseng, Chauvet or Maltravieso art, she shined.

Around the crude fire of gathered and dried wood hunched the clan of ten. Filthy, raw boned, unshod and only partially covered with animal skins, they ate. Just out of the light, lay a small withered child, dead from eating some mushroom. He had found it a pretty and funny looking thing but discovered to late this poisoned curiosity was no legend of good or evil.

The little body could wait until later, but would be disposed of before the larger beasts caught scent. Occasionally, creatures, shadows in the moonlight, blinked with curiosity, sniffed warily and moved on in search of some other meal. These two-legged creatures had a peculiar stink and could be dangerous. But the dead one next to them is what attracted their attention. Sometimes, the night sounds went still and some loud cry of an animal on the hunt echoed through the forest. Other times, it was the victim's final scream before being torn apart. The clustered group knew which animals were a threat.

Constantly glancing with fear and suspicion at the tangled, ancient forest which surrounded them, they gnawed on dripping half cooked meat. Their tartar choked teeth glistened as they ripped and tore at the deer they had found sick and unable to flee from their crude killing tools. Their gums, reddened from the constant battle with the unknown scourge of scurvy, reeked of rotten meat that was never flossed out from decaying enamel. Occasionally, one might pluck out a raw tooth or perhaps collect them for curiosities. All members grunted and sniffled and scratched and plucked at the ravenous lice that never ceased feasting on their warm-blooded hosts. Manners, hygiene and courtesy were unknown.

Occasionally, they looked up at the strange white orb in the sky that came and went in the night sky. Bright and shiny, it was a mystery. Yet it was also something pleasing…when it was not frighting. It was not hot like the sun and did not hurt the eyes. It shone the same in the hot season and the cold. It did not always look the same and there was a growing sense that it could not only see them but cause things to happen. It watched the tiny, insignificant band, little more than bone step removed from beasts of the woods, with complete indifference. It had seen countless billions of living things come and go in as many years and they were of no account.

Untold Centuries would pass since these short-lived creatures huddled. On the Rhuddlan, where the Ordovicii laid claim and monoliths probed the night sky, the silver orb continued to spray its magic upon fields and copses, forests and glens. These new peoples dwelt there long after the lumbering, thick boned tribes had perished millennia ago by the River Clwyd. Women chipped flint and chert to scrape, men threw them and struck with stone mallet while children darted furtively about…those that were to survive the deadly world under the shining orb. Eyes wandered up at the shining disc and women noticed that they bled with the wax and wane of the moon. Men were left in wonder and fear and began using their rapidly developing speech and imagination to form priests and spells, traditions and obligations to satisfy these strange omnipotent powers.

Bahloo and the snakes, far far from the Northern climes, in the wastes of ancient Terra Australis washed huts and paths with his light and shown upon an ancient people, who made the canyons echo at night with the deep throated Didgeridoo.

The wide deserts and hills of on the Euphrates the Gala raised the incantation bowl to Nanna, son of Markduk, in the city of Ur where temples and Ziggurats reached.

In the Nile kingdoms, between Red Sea and sand seas of the Sahara, the hemet-netjer tended to the needs of Konsu or Thoth and his baboon or ibis face. Together, wisdom, renewal learning would be assured.

Anaxagoras, the heretic and blasphemer, dared called the night celestial deity Selene a mere rock that shines. His own light was exiled, even as the classical mind was raised the world strangled by superstition, terror and fear.

On the moors, heath and mountains of Britannia, Druids mapped the skies and strangled bog men for centuries until Claudius replaced them with Luna.

Ah Kin in the jungle strongholds of Kaminaljuyu preferred the knife to satisfy the sky with a beating heart and tumbling corpse on towering Tlachihualtepetl. Only through treading lakes of blood could prosperity be assured. Here, though, among palaces and frescoes, astronomy and mathematics, they flourished and grew.

The chosen Hebrews, the Judaic priests and mystics and their Kabbalah demoted the orb to a symbol under one God. Their marvelous Tetragrammaton and Rosh Chodesh explained, with the alchemists and astrologers, the function of the glowing silver orb.

Everywhere, the globed orbs of day and night demanded the legions of slit throats of men and beast so that water and rain should come, crops grow and victory in battle be assured. The fertile fields of women were given over to the priests and their injunctions.

Poets saw the beauty; artists were inspired to tears; lovers felt the thrill; in Wintery Lapland folk tales told of Kuu and musicians plucked the soul. Luna, Chandra, Máni, Arianrhod, found new life in culture while sailor and scientist probed deeper into its shining surface.

City and town, colony and empire grew under her light. Science and logic, engineering and physics, culture and creation, bloomed under the faithful silver light. Wood and thatch grew to mason and timber. Mudbrick and Marble spawned steel, concrete and glass that reached higher and farther to scrape the sky as fingers to touch her surface. Rocket and plane soared high while messages flew far and wide, light and energy harnessed to mighty levels to catapult the two-legged mankind to the heights of absolute power under the ever faithful and true simple light.

Men set foot on her surface, ran hands through the powered dust and brought pieces back to share. No man, dragons or cheese found on this distant world. Moons beyond counting, stars beyond reckoning and never fading jewels of brilliant colors in the farthest fabric of the firmament reached out and beckoned the earth's people. Once they were a little more than brutes grunting in speech and rutting openly as the animals. But as the moon gaze dumbly, the mighty threw themselves down and nearly destroyed themselves with power equal to the sun. They scythed themselves down with biology and chemistry, shaped to weapons of war to feed pride, ambition and domination. The world was not enough in shared parts.

Green turned to brown, brown turned to black while the living wilted and sleeping died. Only in the deepest black depths of the seas did life sway unchanged, ignorant of the changes above and blind to the moon and sun. The seas rose to swallow land and mountains towered silent over endless fields and plains that all still shone silver under a silent sky.

Strange formations and metal things can now be found with clever symbols, odd shapes and unknown or unimaginable purposes. The earth has swallowed most of the offense and scars into

the seas, sands and forests. Earth has returned the green and life to the world, made the seas once again teeming with life and populated the sky with flying things of all sizes though many are now different...those that survived to carry on.

Even the two-legged things, for they no longer are the same as they were. Even they can be found in places, stunted with the torn and mutilated fiber of the codes that make their bodies. Now, after centuries of short hard lives under the stary sky, questioning eyes again look up at the sky at the unchanging globe of silver white. Some returned to living in the safety of trees from stalkers of the night which prowl mercilessly on the forest floors. Others reside in caves where predators hesitate to enter and the rains and floods can't reach. They are stunted creatures, ignorant of all that came before, but ignorance is no crime. They have yet to emerge from the darkness of stupidity and vainglorious ambition embraced by their forebearers who knew better.

One day they might think deeply again should they ever emerge from the tiny, short lived, sparse and close-knit communities in which they now dwell. Small, hopelessly inbred and twisted with scars curses the old world, that isn't certain. But among some, there might be a question asked. Perhaps, the ever-watchful globe in the night sky, might need a sacrifice to protect from the beasts of the jungle.

Definitions and further reading:

Poetry

The Fisherman

Borkum – this has a double meaning. Borkum was an area near Saxony where U-20 was launched that sank the Lusitania.

Iron Coffin – was a term used by submariners at various points but came frequently into use in WW2

Captain William Thomas Turner – Commanding officer of the Lusitania

Kapitänleutnant Walther Schwieger – U-Boat commander that sank the Lusitania

Ægir – in Norse mythology Ægir is associated with the sea but his 9 daughters represent characteristics of the sea.

Charon – Boatman in Greek mythology who was paid to ferry the dead over the river Styx.

Goetz's coin-Medalist Karl Xaver Goetz struck a coin commemorating the sinking of the Lusitania

Good Ole Days II

Gibbet – form of punishment that seems to have originated around the 13th century in which a prisoner is hanged inside a cage of some design for public scorn and punishment. Generally, the prisoner was executed first but occasionally left to die suspended while anyone within sniffing distance got the message.

The Baton

Tannenberg -Battle of Tannenberg in 1914 in East Prussia
Alexander Sampsonov - Commander Russian Second Army who committed suicide after the crushing defeat.
Yakov Grigoryevich Zhilinsky – Commander Northwestern Front from Russian Empire who lost the Battle of Tannenberg. Sampsonov's 2nd Army was under his direction.
Paul von Hindenburg-Theater Commander on the Eastern front during the Battle of Tannenberg
The traitors of '19 -reference to the 'stab in the back' theory that focused on antisemitic causes and was used by Hitler with great effect in the subsequent decades after 1919.
Black shame – 'The Black Disgrace', 'The Black Horror on the Rhine' was a response by defeated Germans to the occupational troops from Senegal. Moral outrage was frequently stirred up in depictions such as: "primitive African barbarians...stuffed their haversacks with eye-balls, ears and heads of the foe", "barely restrainable bestiality of the black troops" quoted from Wikipedia reference: *Campbell, Peter (June 2014). The "Black Horror on the Rhine": Idealism, Pacifism, and Racism in Feminism and the Left in the Aftermath of the First World War. Social History.* XLVII. *pp. 471–496.*

This topic, among many others, would be used in the future propaganda, eugenics and annihilationist policies of Nazi Germany.
Bolsheviks – Russian Social Democratic Party later renamed the Communist Party.
Lorrain and the Ruhr - *Alsace-Lorraine* is a region that has been a source of conflict between Germany and France in past wars. *Ruhr* - A part of Germany that was occupied after WW1 and comprises a fairly large size of German industrial capacity. After Reparations for that war were not paid in 1923, the French took it. Hitler took it back.
Don – A River in Central Russia
Oberst – the rank of colonel used in various armies but here in the German army.
Bandenkampf – refers to 'bandits' or 'partisans'. In the context of the poem and Nazi Germany, it's a reference to partisan and guerilla warfare. Such units were known to be beyond brutal and had virtually carte blanche to operate in the most extreme and blatantly inhumane methods imaginable.

Namibia I

Lüderitz is a town on the coast of Namibia and an inhospitable place. Aus is another town in Namibia. There is railway that was being constructed between the two during the time of the war between Germany and the Herero/ Nama tribes.
General Adrian Dietrich Lothar von Trotha – Leader in charge of Colonial Namibia that prosecuted war against the tribes and signed an order for genocide:
"On 2 October 1904, Trotha escalated the violence against the Herero in an order: 'Within the German borders, every male Herero, armed or unarmed […] will be shot to death. I will no longer take in women or children but will drive them back to their people or have them fired at. These are my words to the Herero people." (https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/what-was-the-holocaust/what-was-genocide/the-herero-and-namaqua-genocide/)
Herero and Nama – Indigenous tribes of Namibia and victims of calculated genocide pursued by the German Empire.

(https://www.ariel.ac.il/wp/rsg/herero-genocide/)

Namibia II

Swakopmund – costal city in Namibia

The last two lines are pivotal for the creation of this poem. I read about how modern Namibia has mass graves that really go unmarked but that tourist DO in fact use the unmarked mounds as jump ramps for ATVs (all terrain vehicles). The very idea was so offensive that I felt compelled to write something on this appalling and disgraceful reality.

Namibia III

Shark Island, *"Death Island"* was a death camp in off the coast of Lüderitz, Namibia.
Dr. Eugen Fischer, professor of medicine, anthropology and eugenics
Dr. Hugo Bofinger, physician and Bacteriologist

Leonhard Schultze, Leonhard Sigmund Friedrich Kuno Klaus Schultze-Jena, zoologist, explorer and anthropologist

Namibia IV

Oueverumue – a geological formation in Namibia and the last place one can obtain water before heading out into the *Kalahari* desert.
Omaheke **-** a desert in Namibia and where the Germans under von Totha killed Herero trying to leave the desert having been driven there and run out of food and water.
Befehl – German word for command, usually an official order
Jewelry – the Germans introduced the use of dics or tags with a number that, with the death of a holder, would be re-issued to the next person. This is a forerunner of the numbering with tattoos.

Namibia IV

Lebensraum **-** German for living space

Namibia VI

This work song is a nod to a real work song that the Nazi concentration camp inmates had to sing. That song was in Treblinke courtesy of SS officer Kurt Franz
white necks a kind of Corvus in Namibia, probably the Corvus Albicollis or White necked Raven
schornsteinfeger – a chimney sweep which was an offensive label given by the Germans to the Africans
Menschenschreck – a term for the indigenous Africans meaning 'human horror' it is not the more familiar term untermensch which was directed at Jews.
Kurt Franz's **Treblinke song**:

Looking squarely ahead, brave and joyous, at the world. The squads march to work. All that matters to us now is Treblinka. It is our destiny. That's why we've become one with Treblinka in no time at all. We know only the word of our Commander. We know only obedience and duty. We want to serve, to go on serving until a little luck smiles on us again. Hurray!

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_Franz *(footnote 13)*

Sachsenhausen had their own song.

We march along with steady step,
defying need and sorrow;
and marching with us is the hope
of freedom and tomorrow.

What lies behind us is the past,
we won't drag it along;

the future needs a real man,
to it we sing our song.

From Esterwegen we set out,
away from moor and mud,
and Sachsenhausen was soon reached,
the gates were once more shut.

Behind barbed wire is our work,
our backs are sore from bending,
we're turning hard, we're turning tough,
our work is never ending.

A lot arrive but no one leaves,
the years just slip away,
before the camp is fully built
we will be old and gray.

Life lures beyond the wire fence:
it tempts us with its wonders,
the thought makes our throats go dry
and our minds will wander.

We march along with steady step,
defying need and sorrow;
and marching with us is the hope
of freedom and tomorrow.

http://www.camps.bbk.ac.uk/documents/013-new-camps-for-men.html

Penis Peddler

Sandy Hook- Elementary School Shooting that occurred on December 14, 2012 in Newton Connecticut where a man shot and killed 26 including 20 children. Wayne LaPierre, of the National Rifle Association, made a public statement saying more guns and security were needed rather than any sort of screening or control. The basis for the poem here is sarcasm and satire with direct ties to the well-known Freudian idea of phallic obsession and guns. There is also suggestive correlation on sexual disfunction and gun ownership. (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/15579883211044342)

https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/you-it/201510/what-men-need-play-its-not-guns

Good Old Days III

Specifically in response to Roy Moore of Alabama who, when asked when America was last great, responded it was before the civil war. There are many other points worth writing about but I found this one obnoxious on its face.

https://www.newsweek.com/roy-moore-last-time-america-great-during-slavery-741845
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2017/12/08/roy-moore-america-was-great-in-era-of-slavery-is-now-focus-of-evil-in-the-world/

The Confirmation

This epigram, in the spirit of the most biting of the ancient Catullus was written for the benefit of Former Atty General Jeff Sessions. He was, and presumably still is, notorious for being obsessed with LGBT rights and regardless of ones opinions on the matter, persecuting gays, and other minorities, by a publicly elected official makes him perfect game for satire.
https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/homophobes-might-be-hidden-homosexuals/
https://www.cnn.com/2016/12/01/politics/kfile-jeff-sessions-lgbt-conference/index.html
"The results of this study indicate that individuals who score in the homophobic range and admit negative affect toward homosexuality demonstrate significant sexual arousal to male homosexual erotic stimuli." https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/assault/roots/freud.html

Prose

The Crossroads 1945

Mauthausen – Nazi Concentration camp in Austria,
The Knochenmühle – nickname for Mauthausen roughly translating as 'the bone mill or crusher' as there was a quarry there.
Muselmann – Inmates of concentration camps who were thus described often were at the point of death.
G.I. – term for US Soldiers or Government Issue
SS – Schutzstaffel is the encompassing term for the German Nazi paramilitary organization that administered the state and later had an armed wing that fought in various engagements.

The Missionaries

This prose, transparently hostile to the evangelical community in the United States was done for a reason. After reading about how American evangelicals were losing the culture wars in America, they focused new their attention on Africa. There is no question that missionaries have a mixed history of helping and doing great beneficial things for indigenous peoples who otherwise get ignored. There is also, conversely, no doubt to the long list of terrible consequences of religious indoctrination and practices of missionaries. In this case, in the 21st century, since evangelicals have focused their attention on Africa, the persecution and even execution of gays has been amplified as a direct consequence. Even other religious authorities in Africa have made this tragic and inhuman observation.

- https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/18/us-evangelicals-africa-charity-missionaries-homosexuality

- https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/how-uganda-was-seduced-anti-gay-conservative-evangelicals-9193593.html
- https://prospect.org/world/exporting-anti-gay-movement/
- https://medium.com/an-injustice/fundamentalists-lost-culture-war-in-u-s-so-they-outsourced-it-to-africa-64fea8ebb33c
- https://www.politicalresearch.org/2009/12/01/us-christian-right-and-attack-gays-africa
- https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2005/dozen-major-groups-help-drive-religious-right%E2%80%99s-anti-gay-crusade
- https://www.huffpost.com/entry/whos-helping-finance-ugandas-kill-the-gays-bill-you-are_b_2229509
- https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/03/scott-lively-anti-gay-law-uganda/

The Execution

This was purely a speculative bit of prose wondering what might go through the mind of a person that was innocent of the crimes for which he was convicted might think. It's a stream of consciousness for the most part. Wrongful convictions have a disturbing number that have been revealed and it doesn't take much thought for even the most unimaginative dullard to realize that among those discovered, there are many others that were not. The thoughts of someone dying are interesting since we all must follow the same dark path. I've not read much on executions in this light since, generally speaking, one cannot follow up the event with an interview to the executed's private thoughts.

Captain Joe Bird is a well-known cemetery where convicts are buried. Heart Island is in New York where more than one million people are buried.
Albert Woodfox served more than 43 years in a 9x6 cell and sometimes smaller for armed robbery.
Presumably, a prisoner on death row for decades would become aware of many such facts including the botched executions and other fates of prisoners.

The Operator's Glory for Poem and Prose

These two works are in reference to the courts martial of Navy Chief Edward Gallagher who was accused of a murdering a 17-year-old prisoner of war who was unarmed, wounded and with a knife. Although he was exonerated by the unexpected reversal of testimony of a team member, he was convicted of a lesser crime despite other members of his team insisting to the contrary. Only through direct political intervention of the president to overrule the Navy (highly unusual and controversial) was he not only not punished but had his rank restored and allowed to retire with full benefits and now has his own action figure and commercial success. Why the writings? The mindsets of those who fight in war are varied. Yet what is less discussed are those who enjoy war, perhaps, too much.

The Moon

Leang Timpuseng – a/k/a Maros-Pangkep caves near Maros, on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi est. 33,400 years ago
Chauvet- Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave in France est. 30-32,000 years ago
Maltravieso cave in Spain east. 66,700 years ago
Rhuddlan area that became settled in Wales on the River Clwyd
Ordovices - tribe in ancient Britain
River Clwyd – a river in Wales that rises in the Clocaenog Forest
Bahloo – Aboriginal Diety that is a 'moon man' with three snakes
Didgeridoo – Australian deep throated instrument with mouthpiece and long tube
Gala – priests of the Sumerian goddess Ianna
Euphrates – river in the ancient region of Sumeria
Nanna – is the Mesopotamian god of the moon and wisdom (not to be confused with the Norse deity of the same name)
Marduk - the chief god of the city of Babylon
Thoth – Egyptian deity of the moon, of reckoning, of learning, and of writing
Khonsu – also an ancient Egyptian god of the moon
Anaxagoras – Greek that said moon was actually a rock and exiled for blasphemy
Selene – Greek moon goddess (also Phoebe) the Romans later renamed Luna
Ah Kin - Mayan Priests
Kaminaljuyu – one of the larges Mesoamerican cultural centers for Mayas
Tlachihualtepetl – The Great Pyramid of Cholula in Mexico
Kabbalah – Mystical and occult beliefs of Jewish faith

Tetragrammaton – four letter name of God that represents all things
Rosh Chodesh - is the monthly holiday that celebrates the arrival of the new moon
Lapland – a historically mystical area in Finland
Kuu – Finnish moon goddess
Chandra – Hindu god of the moon
Máni –Germanic moon god brother to the sun Sol
Arianrhod – Celtic moon deity